

Copy Book Stuff

BY SOPHIE KERR



MARIE PUSHED THROUGH THE CROWD. "HOW DID YOU GET HERE?" SHE DEMANDED.

The Lions Were Waiting to Be Fed. "Stay on the Side Porch," Said Martha to Alec

What Caused the Scene in This Diverting Story of Love in a "Select Boarding House"?

He sat up and stared out into the night. The darling little scamp! The little rascal! Did she mean it? Did she mean it? After all, he was only twelve years older than she—the dreams of an earlier evening came back with a snap. For a girl like Martha, any man, even a failure, might achieve the impossible. What a pal, what a wife she would make! She'd never be satisfied with a failure.

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Use Rammed Earth in House Building

(Continued from Third Page.)

earth wall. When the mold is taken down the blocks removed the floor beams may immediately be put into the holes thus left and fastened.

Nor is there any danger of the wood rotting. As the earth dries it protects the wood from all-destrorying fungi and bacteria. Wood has been found in trecked pile buildings in England and France which was a hundred years old or more and it was as sound as when it was put in. Seasoned lumber should be used, of course.

After the mold has been set up on the foundation the first layer of prepared earth is put in to a depth of about five inches. This is then carefully rammed down. It is perfectly solid. It will then be about half its first volume and the rammer will make no impression on the earth.

The rammers, weighing about fifteen pounds each, should be used with rather short, light strokes, tapping the earth next to the mold boards first and then working toward the center of the form. No fresh earth should be put in until all the first layer is rammed down so hard it "rings" when struck. Then the second layer of four inches more of loose soil may be placed inside and rammed, and so on, until the mold has been filled with a layer after layer of pounded earth. It will form one solid, homogeneous mass.

The rammers, all authorities advise, should never be applied in unison. When the rammers are at work they should hit the earth at separate times. Unison ramming tends to loosen the earth between the points hit. This is very evident as soon as one has tried it.

Various shapes—oblong, round and square—are required for the ramming tools, and it is essential that the first rammer be made of wood. An oak block, faced with iron, was used at Glen Echo. Old treatises emphasize this point, advocating the use of oak or beech root wood as being the best material for the ramming tools.

There is no reason, the old books state, to fear overloading the first course of rammed earth with the second, if the earth has been properly "planned." Three courses, it was stated, may be safely laid in a day. Further experience has shown that as soon as the walls are raised to their proper height the heaviest beams and timbers for the floors may be laid on the newly made walls without the slightest danger. The heaviest timbers for the roof may be laid on the gables in place construction the instant the mold is taken down.

Remember that the authorities who gave that information were accustomed to real beams. Hand-hewn lumber was a general thing in 1819, when the encyclopedia which vouched for the strength of pile walls was printed. Tests made on Dr. Humphrey's house confirmed that strength.

When the first section of the bottom course is completed the mold is withdrawn. It should then be laid immediately next the end of the newly made wall and the second section started. A "key" to hold these two sections together is advised and easily inserted into the mold. As the sections proceed all are thus keyed together.

When the first course is complete the second may be laid right on top of the first without delay. The joints at the end of the mold in the second course should stagger with the joints of the first course. The rammed earth looks very like concrete when the mold is taken off. The marks on the boards, such as the grain of the wood, show distinctly if the pile work has been properly done.

In place work the second-story walls may be made thinner than the first story with perfect safety. That is, if eighteen-inch walls are used from the foundation to, say, twelve feet, then fourteen-inch walls will carry on from there up to the gable point. Interior walls of twelve inches will be strong enough to support the floor beams.

As a climax to this important rediscovery in building, it is verified that pile earth walls may be finished in any way desired. The rammed earth is as smooth as planed wood. Paper may be applied directly to it. Plaster sticks to it more closely than to wooden lath, and it is much more quickly applied. The capillary action of the dry earth seems to suck the moisture from the plaster almost visibly.

The outside, or weather, side of the wall may be treated with a coating of waterproofing made of lime and tallow. Over this coating it was the ancient custom to apply fresco decorations in water-color paint. The building may be treated with a cement wash or painted directly, as you prefer. The natural color of the pile depends on the quality of the soil used, and is frequently of great beauty.

THERE was electricity in the air, keen troubling. Mrs. Cleburne's paying guests, assembled at dinner, were aware of it, and ate their delicious orange custard in silence. They had heard the custard cups being thumped down on the serving tray out in the pantry. They had seen the scared eyes of Regina, the colored waitress, as she came in. Even the lovely quiet of the June evening and the majesty of Mrs. Cleburne herself did not reassure the guests.

The custard, being finished, Mrs. Edwards and her married sister, Mrs. Worell, hurried away to the movies. M. Pentz thought he'd just step down to the store and look up one or two bad accounts.

Mr. Bert Green simply disappeared. Mrs. Ogleby, the high-school teacher, also vanished. "I have some things to correct," she said, and disappeared. Remaining at the table, therefore, were only Mrs. Cleburne, her daughter Marie and Alec Lowden, who had eaten his custard and stayed for coffee, with no apparent cognizance of the human storm raging so near.

At twenty, Alec Lowden had set out to become the great American painter. Now, at thirty-two, he was commercial artist on the staff of an advertising agency. For three summers he had come out and spent five months at Mrs. Cleburne's, commuting to the city, and was, therefore, almost like one of the family.

Marie Cleburne rolled her eyes significantly toward the pantry and said: "How did she find out?"

"Why—you see—" hesitated Mrs. Cleburne—"I had the dress sent out C. O. D. I hadn't quite enough money with me; and when it came, I simply said to Martha: 'Let me have ten dollars, dear, will you?' And at once she began to be disagreeable."

"But she gave it to you?"

"Well—I've got the dress on," Mrs. Cleburne glanced down complacently at herself. "My dear, I had to have something. I was in rags, literally in rags. This is only a cheap little thing; but after your peach-bloom taffeta—felt that I couldn't afford anything better. No mothers must be unbecomish, Mr. Lowden." She gave Alec Lowden a smiling, sweet glance.

"I don't know why she's so set on going to this dance, anyway," pursued Marie.

"Martha takes fancies like that sometimes. And it worries me to death to persuade her out of them." But Mrs. Cleburne's placid face didn't show a line.

"I'd be glad enough to have her go," cooed Marie. "But she's got no dress, and nobody to take her, and I simply can't have her hanging along with me now that Gus Kramer—you know what I mean, mother."

MARIE got up slowly. If she had ever applied to any theatrical manager for a job, she would have been described technically as "big blond, good show-girl type."

Her mother's gaze dwelt on her fondly as she disappeared. "It's my greatest delight just to look at Marie," she explained to Alec. "She's exactly what I was at her age, exactly. With her face—and her figure—she could marry any one—any one! If we could only afford to go to some really fashionable summer resort for just one season—"

She rose, with just a hint of haste. "You don't mind if I leave you? I want to speak to Marie."

"What she really wants is to get from under before Martha steps in," thought Alec. Aloud he said, "Oh, I mind, of course, Mrs. Cleburne, who wouldn't? But under the circumstances—"

He did not sit down again but walked over and flung open the pantry door. "Come on in and get your dinner, Martha," he said. "You've scared 'em all away but me. Come in and tell me all about the row."

The girl who entered and dropped down wearily at the table was neither big nor blond, nor near to beauty. She was of no type, nondescript, medium height, with dark, untidy hair, a determined little chin, and lips drawn tight. Her pink calico dress was faded. Her sleeves were rolled up, her collar open. Only her eyes, almond-shaped, with flecks of green and brown in their shadowy depths, fringed with heavy lashes, intensely alive, intensely unhappy, redeemed her from insignificance.

"I don't want anything but a cup of coffee, Regina," she said to the waitress.

"Oh, eat some soup," urged Lowden. "That was wonderful soup tonight. You made it, didn't you?"

"I got the whole dinner. Amelia Ann has gone on strike."

"How come?"

"Ah, there you have it," said Martha. "My, that soup is good!" "Bring some chicken and some rice and the fruit salad and hot rolls for Miss Martha, Regina," ordered Lowden.

"What was all the row about?" asked Lowden presently. "Why are you on the war path? Everybody else is here, expecting to see you enter with war cries and tomahawks."

"I'd've liked to. I have got 'em terrorized, haven't I? But they stay—they stay. That's my cooking—mine and Amelia Ann's."

"You may as well tell me. It's something about your mother's new dress—and that club dance Marie's going to tomorrow night."

"So they're been talking. Then I suppose I may, too. It's a simple story. I paid the town tax yesterday and the insurance, and I hadn't a red cent. And I'd promised Amelia Ann ten dollars' advance for an installment on her furniture set. By digging and scrounging and stalling, she'd gotten the ten dollars, and then mother went into Baltimore, bought that new dress, and had it

sent out C. O. D. I ought to've made her send it back."

"Why didn't you?"

"I hardly know. I was so tired and there was so much to do, and she cried and carried on so. So I gave her the ten dollars. Amelia Ann went on strike, and I had to get dinner. She'll be back tomorrow, though."

"But what has all this to do with the dance tomorrow night?"

Something pitiful and young flashed across Martha's face, and was gone. "Oh, I got a silly streak. I got it into my head, somehow, that I'd like to go to that dance. So I told mother to look around when she was in town and see if she could find a little dress for me at the sales. And—and when the box came this afternoon—at first—I thought—that was what it was."

She stopped abruptly. "Oh, well, it really doesn't matter," she went on, presently. "I'd have had a dull time, I suppose. But I'd just as well be tired and look—lights and music and young people, and no can't towels to think about, nor grocer's orders, nor Amelia Ann. Oh, darn everything!"

She laughed. "I had a brain-storm. I can tell you. Mother and Marie cringed, and as for poor Regina, she covered every time I touched a butcher knife. Anyway, we've blown ourselves for a magnificent costume for Marie, and she certainly ought to be able to make Gus Kramer fall when he sees her in it. Ops, my dear! She sure do look malicious, as Regina says. And if she only can get Gus—that'll be one liability written off this establishment. But Gus is spoiled, and Marie is a poison mushroom to talk to—one of the deadliest amanita that ever killed a conversation. Give me a cigarette, will you?"

"Come outside and smoke it. You have to wash the dishes?"

"No, Regina will. Golly, it's fine to sit down and loaf with a sympathetic soul."

"THERE goes your mother down the street," said Lowden, as she sat on the side porch. "Where's she off to—the movies?"

"No; going down to play bridge with old Mrs. Granger and the Millises. She'll come home with thirty cents' winnings, and as pleased as Punch. Funny about mother—she's one of those women who never look at the truth, never see it. When she was a girl she thought she'd marry money and live in a big house, and have lots of servants and entertain a lot. She married a father, who was as poor as poverty, and hounded him into buying this place and let him work himself to death trying to pay for it. Then we had to take boards. But it's all the same to mother. She's living in a big house, even if it is nearly tumbling down; she's got servants—me and Regina and Amelia Ann; she has guests—who pay their way, to be sure, but what difference does that make?"

"Are you sure," asked Lowden, "that you look at the truth. This dance, for instance. Can't you really go?"

"Without a man, and without a dress? Alec, wake up."

"It won't do. You ought never to wear white. Martha, it's hideously unbecoming to you. Hasn't Marie got a dress you could snitch, in an emergency like this?"

"Marie would scream till you could hear her in Baltimore before she'd let me take a rag of hers."

"Need she know it—until afterward? She can hardly scream at the dance, before the capious Gus."

Martha began to laugh. "Marie's got a white crepe de chine that will be perfectly all right for me. I'll have to hem it up."

"But it's white. Hasn't she got something in a brilliant color—flame, or Indian red, or orange, or henna?"

"They don't suit our dear Marie's simple girlish style."

"Bring down the dress anyway, and let me look at it."

"I can't get it yet. She's sitting upstairs at the front window waiting for Gus Kramer to come in his car and toot the horn for her. Believe me, Alec, if any man came for me in his car and sat and tooted the horn, I'd never run out to him, unless maybe I had a full-size, hard-hitting brick in either hand."

"What a little tough you are."

"Yes, I am. I'm fed up with trying to run this place on a shoestring, and mother and Marie nothing but a pair of parasites. Just when I get something laid aside for the plumber, dear Marie has to have new pumps—\$14, bing; or mother blows herself to a frock, as per today. And what do I get? Seven days a week of heavy toil. Well, pardon my ravings."

"Listen—there's the Noble Gustus—"

A low, sporty car stopped well out in the street and the song of the hooter was heard in the land. They could hear Marie's rush down stairs, the flatterer joy of her greeting. Inarticulate guttural replied. The car "chuffed," said away.

"May she be inspired to brilliancy—until she's got him," said Martha fervently. "Send her a thought-wave, Alec, maybe it'll help the poor old bean to spark."

"You skip up and get that dress," commanded Lowden.

Martha appeared with a limp white-ness spread on her arm. "Here it is," she said. "Come inside where we can see it."

It was a simple enough frock, milk-white, the color turning Martha's dark skin to an ugly sallowness as she held it before her. "Nothing but a slip and a sash," she said. "But not bad when it's on, really."

Lowden frowned the soft stuff. "It ought to be flame-color," he said.

time tomorrow we'll be going it." He burst into song: "Will you not come to the ball? You are the fairest of all. Tiddy-tum, tiddy-tum, tum, tum, tum—"

He took a few fantastic steps. "Martha, I'm beginning to anticipate a pleasant occasion."

"Som' I," said Martha grimly, retreating to the kitchen with the bowl and gown.

LOWDEN tapped cautiously at the little hot third-floor room that was Martha's. "She's gone," he whispered. "Are you ready? Does it smell much?"

Martha flung open the door and stood before him in the flame-colored dress. "How does it look?" she asked. "I can't help thinking it's pretty decent, even if it is the loudest garment in the world. It isn't so very whiffy."

thing to do is to dye it. Got any gasoline?"

"Now, what is all this?" said Martha. "You can't dye this dress. Marie would have a fit."

"What does it matter? Let's go in for dye, Martha, you and I. I'll dye this dress a color that will simply put the eye out of everything at that dance. As for Marie—what can she do? Cry? She'll only get a red nose if she does and red noses are so unbecoming to blondes. Come on, bring out that gasoline—quick."

LOWDEN ran upstairs like a boy, pulled out his trunk, and began a terrific rummaging therein. At last the very bottom he found it, the old tin box, a queer little casket to hold dead hope and abandoned ambition. He opened it and fingered the tubes of color, rejecting this one, choosing that. At last he had three and banged the tin box shut.

The mere touch of the paints gave him a thrill.

He squeezed paint into the gasoline, first from one tube, then another. The colorless fluid became red, then changed to fiery orange. He added vermilion. Now it was flame, hue of sunsets, of great falling comets, of smoldering logs, or the wild spurts of hot color that one sees when the flare of converters leaps into the blackness of night.

"Golly," said Martha. "I'll look like a hula girl!"

Lowden did not reply. Speculatively he watched his brew, squeezing, stirring, trying the tint on a dust cloth, salvaging from the pantry. At last he spoke, triumphantly, authoritatively.

"Give me the dress."

He dipped it in, swirled it round and round, lifted it and looked at it critically, put it back in the bowl, and then he said, "That color's glorious!" she said at last.

He gently squeezed and patted the dress. "We must hang it up somewhere now, outdoors preferably. I'll think it's going to be all right. It'll smell to heaven—you'll have to put it where it can warm all day tomorrow or it'll whiff up the whole dance. And I'll need pressing."

"Run along, destroy the evidence, murderer's togs," said Martha. "Talk about crime! Alec, Alec, you impetuous, hot-headed youth—"

"Cut it out," said Alec Lowden, but he felt a cheerful warmth at the words. "Run along, destroy the evidence, murderer's togs. I've taken your gray cape—"

MRS. CLEBURNE, holding forth a steady monologue to Mr. Pentz, stiffened and stared. Mr. Pentz for a moment did not identify the tall man in evening clothes nor the dark, brilliant girl by his side.

"Martha!" exclaimed Mrs. Cleburne, regaining power of speech. "Mr. Lowden! What—where—"

"Alec and I thought we'd look in at the club dance, mother," said Martha, languidly elegant. "I've taken your gray cape—"

"Why, who is that?"

"Who's the tangerine?"

"Who's the vamp in red?"

Gus Kramer, dancing with Marie, craned his neck. "Say, isn't that your sister Martha?"

"Mercy—no! Martha here? Gus, you'd better get spectacles."

"All right," agreed Marie drolly. Then, turning to him, for after all, he was like one of the family, she complained: "I don't know what to make of Martha. And where did she ever get such a loud dress? And she's painted—Martha—painted!"

"The men seem to like it," Lowden pointed out to her gently. "After all, she's not made up any more than—"

"But that's different." She was naive in her selfishness. "Martha's not—not—"

"Her slow mind fumbled for words."

"Come along, the music's starting," Lowden said, and Marie rose. She did not talk while they danced, but kept looking after Gus and Martha.

Martha came back to Alec, triumphant. "Gus wants to take me out in his car tomorrow night," she confessed. "I don't know what to make of him. What sort of girl am I, Alec, do you think?"

"If you asked the girls here tonight they'd say you are a designing little cat. If you asked the men they'd say 'Some peach.'"

"And which would you say?" "Fifty-fifty. Martha—are you flirting with me?"

"I'd flirt with old Mr. Pentz tonight. Me for the primrose path after this. And, by the way, do you want to dance with me again? If so, speak up quick."

"Oh, heavens, I'm not getting excited," she said after a moment. "Alec, do you—do you really think I'll have any sort of time?"

"I do think you're going to have a good time, Martha. Every one here knows every one else so well that a new girl is a sensation. That's what you'll be, practically a new girl."

"And, after all, it doesn't matter either way," said Martha. Then she burst out: "It does matter, awfully. You'd never know how terribly I wanted to go to this little tuppence-happy dance. I felt as though it were a symbol—that if I didn't go it meant that I'd be shut up there in the kitchen forever and ever. I care awfully about having a good time."

Since they were late there was no one in the clubhouse dressing room. Martha settled herself before the dressing table and went over her make-up with the utmost care. This slim creature of flame and cloud entranced Martha. She ran downstairs to Alec, securely gay.

"Oh, let's get in before the music stops," she cried.

They had not gone once around the big ballroom before the questions began.

"Why, who is that?"

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"But—but—that dress—"

Mrs. Cleburne pointed a trembling finger. "Oh, just a little trifle I had sent over from Paris," answered Martha airily. She bestowed on Mr. Pentz a knowing twinkle.

"Why, you look a perfect peach!" exclaimed that gentleman, gurgling. "Thanks, old dear," said Martha. "That was just what I wanted to know. But I'm afraid we must run along."

"As they stepped into the cool warmth of the summer night Alec said softly: 'First round, and a knockout.' In the semi-darkness Martha smiled ironically. 'Old Pentz did play up. I hope all this doesn't bring on one of mother's attacks.'"

"What do you mean attacks?"

"Oh, temper mostly; sometimes indigestion. But she calls it heart trouble."

"Martha," said Lowden, "you have a hard life. But don't let it make you hard."

"Thanks, grandpa," she retorted. But she gave him a friendly press. "Oh, heavens, I'm getting excited," she said after a moment. "Alec, do you—do you really think I'll have any sort of time?"

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